

Indonesian Muslim Diaspora: Strengthening Cognitive Aspects and Competencies Regarding Islamic Heritage in Southeast Asia

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Abstract:

This study examined the cognitive aspects and competencies of the Indonesian Muslim diaspora in Southeast Asia through a community empowerment program to preserve Islamic heritage. Muslim communities in Southeast Asia have a historical relationship in the process of da'wah, Islamic culture, and the transmission of knowledge. Historical heritage in the form of mosques, tombs, kingdoms, and religious ceremonies is a potential for halal tourism and a challenge for the cultural conservation process. In this regard, the Indonesian Muslim diaspora plays a significant role in efforts to maintain Islamic heritage in Southeast Asia due to their shared culture, traditions, and language. Enhancing the diaspora's cognitive aspects and competencies was a priority for assistance. Therefore, various activities were implemented to improve their ability to document relevant information about Islamic heritage. This endeavor employed a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology to support the Indonesian diaspora residing in Malaysia, Thailand, and Brunei Darussalam. The mentoring program included Focused Group Discussions about Islamic heritage and assistance in improving skills related to data collection and writing about Islamic heritage and Arabic Pegon writing. Following the mentoring activities, notable improvements were observed in the cognitive aspects of the assisted subjects concerning historical mosques and Islamic kingdoms (13.3%), Islamic museums (21.43%), Islamic traditions (35.71%), and Islamic arts (42%), tombs (38.46%), and haul ceremonies (84%). Additionally, there was increased competency in searching and writing Islamic heritage information (13.3%) and Arabic Pegon writing (28.57%) after the mentoring. To ensure program sustainability, the diaspora actively disseminates service outcomes through online directories. Furthermore,

ongoing collaboration is fostered through community-based cultural initiatives, which contribute to preserving Islamic history.

Keywords: *diaspora; Southeast Asia; mentoring; Islamic heritage*

Introduction

The Indonesian Muslim diaspora significantly contributes in various fields, including transferring knowledge and skills to Indonesia, strengthening bilateral relations, and making economic contributions through remittances. It also preserves and promotes Indonesian culture abroad, is involved in social and political activities, and supports community and humanitarian development projects. This role not only raises Indonesia's international profile but also helps in social and economic development within the country.

The ulama of the Indonesian diaspora has contributed to spreading Islam and religious heritage in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Since the 17th to 19th centuries, several scholars have emerged, such as Ahmad Arsyad al Banjari (1626-1699 AD), Ahmad Yusuf Al-Makassari (1710-1812 AD), Abdus Samad Al-Falimbani (1704-1789 AD), Ahmad Khatib Al-Minangkabawi (1860-1916 AD), and Abdul Muhaimin bin Abdul Aziz al-Lasemi (1890-1956 AD) (Aidulsyah & Gusnelly, 2019). They played a significant role in developing religious knowledge, producing religious works that became references, and teaching Islam in various institutions. Their contributions also included promoting moderate Islamic values, playing a role in interfaith peace, and maintaining Indonesia's cultural identity in Asia's cultural diversity. Their written works and religious thoughts remain relevant today and are essential to Indonesia's intellectual heritage.

The diaspora contributes by sending remittances and undertaking diplomatic roles in the social and economic fields. According to data collected by Muhidin and Utomo (2016), the number of Indonesian diaspora in various regions of the world was predicted to reach 8 million people, with the majority residing in Malaysia (35%), Saudi Arabia (13%), UAE (11%), Netherlands (5%), Singapore (5%), Bangladesh

(5%), China and Hong Kong (4%), among others. Their main contributions included sending remittances to Indonesia, eventually providing significant economic support to families and communities back home. The Indonesian diaspora also plays a diplomatic role in strengthening bilateral relations between Indonesia and the countries where they reside, which can positively impact economic and trade cooperation. Given the number of members and diverse locations, the potential social and economic contributions are paramount in supporting the country's economic development and growth.

The Indonesian diaspora is spread across several countries. Bank Indonesia (2022) presented data on the distribution of migrant workers abroad, totaling 3,307 in 2022. In Southeast Asia, there were 1,728 workers spread across Malaysia (1,625 people), Singapore (94 people), and Brunei Darussalam (9 people). In addition, GoodStats (2023) collected additional data on Indonesian diaspora in various countries. The largest populations were in Malaysia (3,500,000), followed by the Netherlands (1,700,000), Saudi Arabia (1,000,000), Taiwan (300,000), Singapore (198,000), Hong Kong (168,000), the United States (142,000), the United Arab Emirates (111,987), and Brunei Darussalam (80,000).

However, there seemed to be no valid data regarding the number of Indonesian diasporas abroad. According to the Directorate of Protection of Indonesian Citizens and Indonesian Legal Aid (*BHI*) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Merdeka.com, 2022), there were 3.1 million Indonesian citizens abroad, based on available data. Nevertheless, the actual figure could reach approximately 9 million individuals. This discrepancy might be attributed to the fact that Indonesian citizens residing abroad often fail to register themselves at the respective embassy of their host country.

Currently, the Indonesian diaspora network has been initiated by several organizations, including Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, Indonesian Diaspora Network (IDN), Indonesian Students Association (*PPI*), and several others. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's most prominent Islamic community, has successfully

expanded its traditions and branches on various continents. Saiman (2019) explains that Nahdlatul Ulama (*PCINU*) has several special branch administrators in different parts of the world, such as Asia (12 branches), Africa (6 branches), America (1 branch), Australia and the Pacific (1 branch), and Europe (7 branches). Muhammadiyah, which promotes progressive Islam, has a diaspora network of Special Branch Leaders spread across 24 countries, including Egypt, Iran, Sudan, the Netherlands, Germany, the United Kingdom, Libya, Malaysia, France, the United States, Japan, Pakistan, Australia, Russia, Taiwan, Tunisia, Turkey, South Korea, China, Saudi Arabia, India, Morocco, Jordan, and Yemen.

The Indonesian Diaspora Network has a vision to consolidate the diaspora spread across 60 countries and contribute to Indonesian society. In this regard, there are several chapters, including Australia, Bahrain, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Finland, France, Japan, Kuwait, Mexico, Myanmar, New Caledonia, Oman, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Qatar, Sweden, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and the United States (IDN Global, 2021).

The diverse diaspora and their varied professional backgrounds are extraordinary assets for increasing contributions to Indonesia, particularly in education, research, and global cooperation, with a distinct focus on efforts to promote world peace based on the identity of the Indonesian diaspora. Correspondingly, promoting Indonesian Islam abroad by the diaspora is seen as a means to expand and strengthen national identity by practicing rituals and religious traditions outside their country of origin.

In addition, diaspora consciousness is understood as individual awareness supporting the characteristics of people living inside and outside their homeland, as well as a product of cultural mingling and historical dialogue (Baumann, 2000). Interestingly, the diaspora plays a dual role. *Firstly*, they serve as Indonesian ambassadors, explaining and presenting values, traditions, and culture in the context of their host country. They maintain their Indonesian identity while adapting and

assimilating into the local culture. *Secondly*, they contribute to a transnational role and influence at the global level in areas such as religion, economics, politics, society, and culture.

Despite the strategic potential, the role of the Indonesian diaspora has not been fully utilized, primarily due to limitations in terms of databases and collaboration, and available data is often imprecise. In this regard, Muhidin and Utomo (2016) indicated an estimated diaspora population of 6 million in 2013 and 8 million in 2015. However, there was no detailed record of the composition of the Indonesian diaspora globally. Hence, the potential remains untapped due to the populations' diverse nature, professional fields, geographic locations, and limited network development.

Therefore, the present community service sought to strengthen the Indonesian diaspora in Southeast Asia based on the Diaspora Engagement System. Southeast Asia was chosen for this initiative due to the historical and cultural similarities between Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and southern Thailand. These countries share common cultures, traditions, languages, and Islamic development history. Additionally, the presence of the *Pegon* script serves as a cross-cultural meeting point. Nonetheless, efforts to build unity, mainly through Islamic heritage, have not been fully optimized.

Furthermore, this community service also addressed the limitations in strengthening the Southeast Asian community through networking and collaboration with the Indonesian diaspora. The goal was to reconnect Islamic networks and Muslim communities in Southeast Asia by studying manuscripts, preserving living traditions, exploring the history of Islamic civilization, and promoting Islamic culture.

There has been limited community involvement in efforts to strengthen the Southeast Asian community. Meanwhile, it can play a significant role as grassroots communities initiate and carry out collective actions, thereby intersecting directly with fellow citizens or residents. The approach employed in this context is cultural, which sets

it apart from formal and ceremonial structural policy mechanisms. Community involvement among culturally similar groups also contributes to building harmonious social cohesion and coexistence.

Furthermore, there have been limitations in Islamic heritage-based cultural engagement programs in Southeast Asia. Some Indonesian diaspora members in Malaysia have received requests to accompany Malaysian Muslims on the Walisongo pilgrimage and visit religious sites in Indonesia. However, the potential has not been fully optimized. For instance, there is untapped potential in tourism that explores the Southeast Asian Walisongo network through pilgrimages to the sites and tombs of the Walisongo and religious networks in Southeast Asia. Other opportunities include Nusantara-Malay Islamic tourism and Nusantara-Malay Islamic festivals.

Afterward, there have been limitations in heritage websites, particularly those related to Islamic heritage, in terms of providing comprehensive information. These websites offer general descriptions, historical timelines, location information, and limited community involvement in information dissemination (digital social engagement). Likewise, there have been limitations in initiatives that promote and increase public awareness of the importance of Islamic heritage in Southeast Asia, even though such endeavors are crucial for conservation and revitalization efforts.

The present community service aimed to empower the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia, Thailand, and Brunei Darussalam. The program sought to enhance the cognitive aspects of Islamic heritage in Southeast Asia and improve competencies in searching for and writing information about Islamic heritage in Southeast Asia, as well as *Pegon* Arabic writing. Through this program, it was anticipated that the Indonesian diaspora in Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia, Thailand, and Brunei Darussalam, would become partners in intercultural dialogue efforts in the region, strengthening their understanding of Islamic heritage and facilitating tourism based on Islamic heritage, traditions, and festivals.

Indonesian Muslim Diaspora: Mapping Subjects, Networks, and Potential

According to relevant observations, studies, and community services, the Indonesian diaspora can generally be classified based on the issues they address: the cluster of diaspora and international citizenship issues, the cluster of diaspora and socio-political issues, and the cluster of diaspora and cultural issues. Despite the third cluster being the focus of this research-based service, it is necessary to explain the first two as they have been more extensively studied based on *Mendeley*, a representative reference database.

Regarding the cluster of diaspora and international citizenship issues, several studies were published by Abdillah (2016), Charity (2016a, 2016b), Jazuli (2017), Novianti (2014), and Rajab (2018). These scientific publications explored demands related to dual citizenship, with various cases in different countries, known as a complex issue drawing the attention of researchers. Fulfilling the requirements for dual citizenship is not a simple matter as it relates to constitutional rights and obligations, leading to resistance from both the government and the Indonesian diaspora. The main issue addressed in these studies was how to develop appropriate and mutually beneficial policies (reciprocal symbiosis) aligning the interests of the Indonesian state and the Indonesian diaspora. Those investigations employed a legal approach and case studies. The general insights comprised of existing policies included policy models that provide privileges such as immigration and residency flexibility to the diaspora and the possibility of developing alternative policy models that must consider three important aspects: the subject, form, and policy objectives.

Regarding the cluster of diaspora and socio-political issues, several relevant studies were carried out by Abhiyoga and Febreani (2021a), Syafitri and Abdulloh (2022), Risman et al. (2018), Trihartono et al. (2020), and Wibisono et al. (2018).

An intriguing aspect of these studies was that diplomacy was approached through a cultural lens. For example, Abhiyoga and

Febreani (2021b) explored gastro-diplomacy through tempeh. They examined the efforts of the Indonesian diaspora in promoting culture in the New Normal era by highlighting the Indonesian food product, tempeh. It aimed to enhance Indonesia's international image. The adoption of new practices encouraged the Indonesian diaspora in the United States to employ alternative strategies for promoting Indonesian specialties. This study analyzed the diaspora's strategy in the United States for building national branding through promoting Indonesian cuisine during the New Normal era. The authors discussed the concept of diaspora and gastro-diplomacy to illustrate the tempeh gastro-diplomacy strategy employed by the Indonesian diaspora in the United States. The findings demonstrated that the Indonesian diaspora's gastro-diplomacy with tempeh, including the establishment of a tempeh factory in the United States, successfully facilitated increased cooperation between Indonesia and Indiana. One potential opportunity for enhanced cooperation is the implementation of a pilot project for increasing the production of premium-quality soybeans in Indonesia.

In addition to the studies mentioned above, legal and political issues in the diaspora context were also examined by Syafitri and Abdulloh (2022). They explored the case of Indonesian citizens who had renounced their citizenship and sought to regain it without relinquishing their foreign citizenship. The research formulated the issue by addressing citizenship status within the framework of international law and the legal protection of the Indonesian diaspora. The results indicate that citizenship is a universal human right that must be respected internationally. The citizenship of Indonesian diaspora members is likewise a universal human right all should acknowledge, thereby granting individuals legal rights and protections under international law. Hence, these analyses aligned closely with the present study focus.

Furthermore, Risman et al. (2018) and Risman & Widodo et al. (2018) conducted investigations closely related to foreign politics. They examined the diaspora's contribution to national defense from a legal

perspective. The concept of defending the Indonesian state was developed into a comprehensive defense system that mobilizes all residents across the territory of the Republic of Indonesia. As Indonesian citizens residing and conducting business abroad, the Indonesian diaspora has the potential to consolidate and contribute to national defense, given their population of approximately 8 million people living in various countries, engaging in diverse professions, and forming transnational communities.

Likewise, Mundaat (2016) conducted a study and service regarding the cluster of diaspora and cultural tourism issues. He examined the social and cultural networks between Indonesia and Malaysia through the Minangkabau diaspora in Malaysia in the context of cultural change. The qualitative method employed in this research included observing changes in Minangkabau culture, followed by a documentary study to explore information on the history of the Minangkabau diaspora in Malaysia and its impact on the matrilineal kinship system. Unstructured interviews were also conducted with second-, third-, or fourth-generation Minangkabau diaspora and new Minangkabau immigrants. Mundaat introduced the concepts of "patrilineality" and "nuclear familiarization," which influenced cultural changes among the third or fourth generation of the Minangkabau diaspora. Accordingly, these factors caused them to become detached from their cultural roots; however, some practiced a hybrid culture. Although this study demonstrated the social and cultural changes of the Minangkabau in Malaysia, social and cultural networks remain influential as they are utilized for cultural and economic purposes. The networks between diaspora communities in Malaysia could potentially develop a regional cultural community. In relation to the community service being conducted, the research report also enhanced understanding of the process involved in determining the subject of assistance and potential topics for development in empowerment, specifically Islamic culture and tourism.

The research mentioned above corresponded with a publication by Salim et al. (2022). The difference was that while the publication regarding the relations between the Minangkabau and Malaysia was based on research, Salim's publication was a service report. They empowered the Indonesian diaspora in China to strengthen their financial literacy. In this regard, the empowerment aimed to increase understanding about investment to achieve passive income. It was relevant to the present service because both contained enriching economic insights; however, this service focused on the economic potential of the spiritual aspect of tourism in Southeast Asia.

International service for the diaspora could not be separated from the insights presented by Narottama (Narottama et al., 2017). He revealed that the Balinese diaspora spread across Europe had a dual role as a mediator/cultural agent and travel agent for Bali and Indonesia. More specifically, he analyzed and discovered how Balinese youth shaped Indonesian cultural identity by maintaining and implementing Balinese values, traditions, and culture in Europe, as well as the extent to which they played a role in promoting tourism in Bali and Indonesia. The main focus of the study was on the Balinese people in Europe, especially in Paris, France, which is famous as a world-class tourist destination. The findings from Narottama's research demonstrated that the Indonesian diaspora appreciates their active role in promoting Indonesian tourism in European countries through various arts and cultural activities. Hence, concerns about the erasure of the cultural identity of generations can be mitigated through multiple activities that require the active participation of Indonesian diaspora communities and their families. In the various activities held, cultural, ethnic, and geographical barriers are removed to form Indonesia's cultural identity. Indonesian culture and arts become symbols of national identity, which are then recognized by European society, strengthening the sense of nationalism among Indonesian people in Europe.

Narottama's research, as mentioned earlier, was one of the measures considered in the service to the diaspora in Southeast Asia. In

this context, it was assumed that there were numerous Muslim diasporas in Southeast Asia, some of whom had been in the diaspora for more than one generation, as revealed by Mundayat's research on the Minangkabau diaspora in Malaysia. However, many diaspora members were unaware of their valuable assets, which could be preserved and developed economically, including Southeast Asia's archipelagic identity and Islamic cultural heritage.

Model of Assistance for the Indonesian Muslim Diaspora

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a collaborative and cyclical research approach involving active participation from the individuals or communities being studied. It emphasizes participant involvement in setting the research agenda, data collection, analysis, and application of findings (Forrester, 2008; Robertson et al., 2017). PAR is rooted in critical social theory and aims to address social problems and bring positive change (Benjamin-Thomas et al., 2018; James et al., 2008). This approach effectively empowers disadvantaged groups and bridges the gap between researchers and research beneficiaries (Benjamin-Thomas et al., 2021).

The components of Participatory Action Research include participation, action, and research, which are interrelated elements of the approach. Participation involves an individual's involvement in life, society, and democracy, while action refers to engagement with experience and history. Research in PAR highlights the development of thought and the growth of knowledge (Robertson et al., 2017).

Assistance to the diaspora was carried out by conducting a pre-test before mentoring. The assisted subjects were subsequently provided with materials and guidance to strengthen their cognitive abilities and enhance their understanding, searching, and writing skills related to Islamic heritage and Arabic *Pegon* writing competence. After the mentoring activities, participants were given a post-test to assess the impact of the service. The results were disseminated through a web directory, which could be accessed by the public to increase their involvement in building cultural awareness in Southeast Asia. The

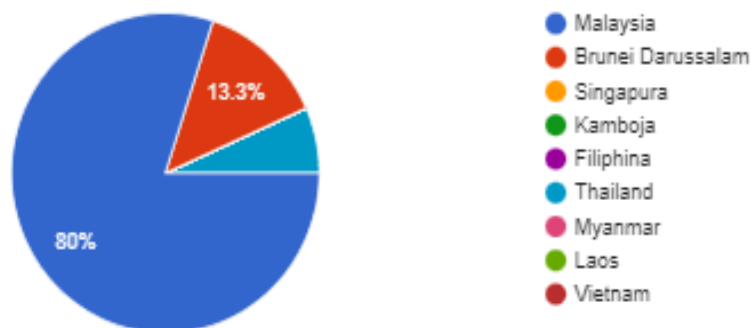
present mentoring process was categorized into three stages: pre-mentoring, the mentoring process, and post-mentoring.

1. Condition of the Assisted Subjects

This community service focused on the theme of Islamic heritage in Southeast Asia and the potential for developing halal tourism in the region. Therefore, the researchers established specific criteria for selecting the subjects of assistance. Priority was given to individuals who not only had diaspora status in Southeast Asian countries but also identified as Muslim, had a concentration, background, or at least interest in Islamic culture, and possessed sufficient prior knowledge about the Islamic world in Southeast Asia. Muslim communities within the visited countries were contacted to ensure adherence to these criteria. Additionally, collaboration was sought with certain universities to obtain their input and guidance in selecting the assisted subjects, comprising 15 individuals. The distribution based on their domiciles is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

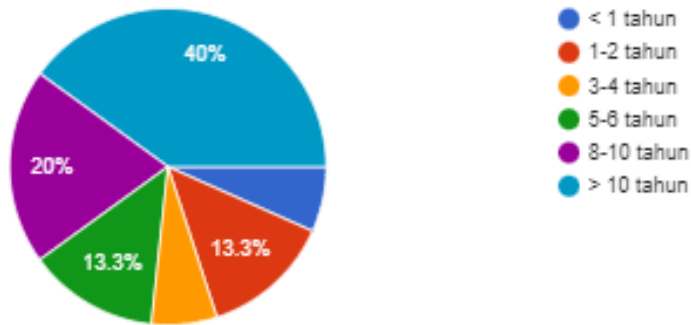
Percentage of Assisted Subjects Based on Country of Domicile



Regarding the period the diaspora subjects resided in a foreign country, most of them lived as a diaspora for more than ten years, followed by those who resided between eight to ten years, and so on. The distribution is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2.

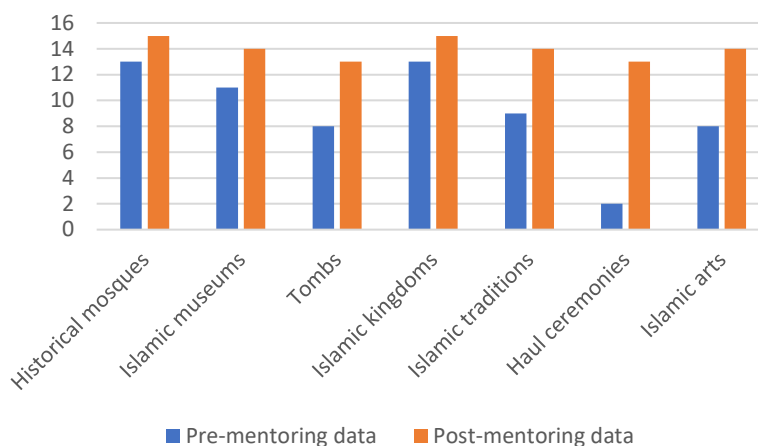
Percentage of Assisted Subjects Based on Duration of Residence as Members of the Diaspora



In this community service, a survey was conducted to assess the cognitive aspect of the subjects regarding Islamic heritage in Southeast Asia before the mentoring activities. This step was crucial to ensure the effectiveness of empowerment and mentoring processes. The survey explored seven relevant cognitive aspects, namely: (1) cognitive aspects regarding historical mosques, (2) cognitive aspects regarding Islamic museums, (3) cognitive aspects regarding tombs, (4) cognitive aspects regarding Islamic kingdoms, (5) cognitive aspects regarding local Islamic traditions, (6) cognitive aspects regarding haul ceremony, and (7) cognitive aspects regarding Islamic art. The survey results on pre-mentoring assessment are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3.

Pre-Mentoring Cognitive Aspects



In the cognitive aspect regarding historical mosques, 13 people (76%) were aware of them, while two people (24%) were not. Regarding the Islamic museums, 11 individuals (73%) had knowledge about them, while four people (27%) did not. Regarding the cognitive aspect concerning the tombs of Ulama/*Wali*/Kings or Islamic figures in the country of residence, the responses demonstrated relatively limited awareness, with eight people (53%) being aware and seven (46%) being unaware. Data on the cognitive aspect surrounding Islamic kingdoms revealed that most participants, 13 people (80%), knew about them, while two people (20%) did not. In terms of local Islamic traditions, such as *Maulidan*, *Sedekah bumi*, and *Sekaten*, in their country of residence, the data indicated that nine individuals (76%) were aware of these traditions, although the link was not significant.

Regarding the haul ceremony, an annual commemorative tradition to honor the deceased, most participants, 13 people (87%), were unfamiliar with it. However, in the cognitive aspect regarding Islamic art (including calligraphy, dance, community, art studios, *Salawat* groups, and Islamic cultural artifacts), the majority, 8 people (53%), knew about it, although the link was not noteworthy.

The above results depict the method for identifying the cognitive aspect of a given topic that required more significant support than others. For instance, cognitive aspects related to historical mosques, Islamic museums, and Islamic kingdoms indicated that dominant assistance might not be necessary, as most participants already possessed good knowledge in these areas. On the other hand, cognitive aspects in local Islamic traditions, haul ceremonies, and Islamic art required more significant assistance. Therefore, the mentoring materials provided to the participants focused more on the latter three topics while incorporating the first three.

Three competencies were assessed before the mentoring activities: information searching, Islamic heritage information writing, and Arabic *Pegon* writing. *Firstly*, in collecting information related to Islamic heritage, the assisted subjects should be able to conduct effective online information searches. The survey revealed that 10 participants (52%) were categorized as Very Good in their ability to search for information on the internet, three participants (4%) as Good, one participant (4%) as Fair, and one participant (4%) as Poor.

Regarding information writing competence, the assisted subjects should possess writing skills. The data indicated that 11 participants (65%) were classified as Very Good, two participants (12%) as Good, one participant (17%) as Fair, and one participant (6%) as Poor. As for the ability to write Arabic *Pegon*, seven participants (46%) were classified as Very Good, three participants (20%) as Good, four participants (27%) as Fair, and one participant (7%) as Poor.

2. Diaspora Assistance Program

The subjects of community service were assisted through several activities: the delivery of materials to improve cognitive aspects in Islamic heritage, assistance in increasing competence in accessing information and writing data about Islamic heritage, and competence in writing Arabic *Pegon*.

- a. Mentoring to increase cognitive aspects in Islamic heritage. The training consisted of three components related to understanding Islamic heritage. The materials included:
 - i. Malay Islamic Agencies, Institutions, and Traditions in the Traces of Historical Records and the Potential of Halal Tourism. In these materials, the facilitators explained the history of the development of Islam in Malay, involving various theories, such as Malay, Gujarati, and Persian theories. It was based on several historical records, such as an ancient inscription in Terengganu written in 1303 AD, an illustration of Malay history in 1612 AD, and the Book of Hakim Leydekker in 1733 AD. Additionally, the facilitators described several Malay Islamic institutions, including palaces, markets, and kingdoms. They also covered Malay Islamic heritage, including education and language, music and dance, architecture and carving, customs, and statutory law.
 - ii. *Jawi* Writing in Brunei Darussalam as Islamic Cultural Heritage of Southeast Asia: The Importance and Challenges It Faces. The facilitators explained the history of the development of the use of Arabic *Pegon* in Southeast Asia, especially in Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, and Malaysia. They presented the historical context and its implementation in the lives of the people of Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. Historically, there was an artifact with the Arabic inscription written in *Pegon Jawi* in Terengganu, describing 1330 AD. Correspondingly, Arabic *Pegon* was also used for the declaration of independence of the Malay lands and inscriptions on the currency. It is also used in corrections, book writing, character names, shop names, and location directions.
 - iii. Indonesia's Islamic Archaeological Heritage and Spiritual Tourism Potential in Southeast Asia (Mosques, Tombs, and Palaces). The facilitators delivered materials related to Islamic cultural heritage in Southeast Asia. In this session, they explained the historical theory of the emergence of Islam in

Southeast Asia and its dissemination process, Islamic kingdoms, the role of ulama in da'wah, and the remains of Islamic history. The subsequent step was the assistance in increasing competency in searching and writing Islamic heritage information. It was anticipated to enhance competency in accessing information; assisted subjects were given tutorials to access several recommended web pages for valid and accurate information searches. Additionally, participants were free to access information directly in the field. They were also asked to practice according to the distribution of mentoring projects for writing Islamic heritage. Facilitators accompanied them to review the writing and provide improvement input before it was finalized and disseminated through the web directory.

- b. Assistance in increasing Arabic *Pegon* writing competence. Participants received materials about the technicalities of Arabic *Pegon* writing. Afterward, they were asked to practice digitally using their laptops/gadgets.

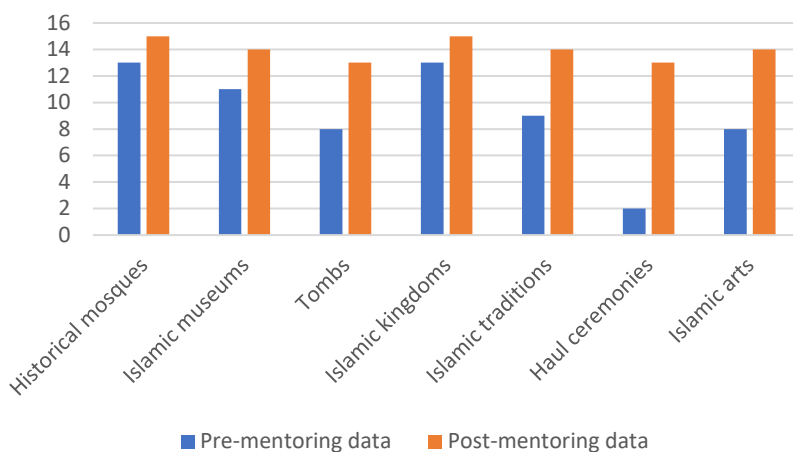
3. Post-mentoring condition of the subjects

This mentoring program aimed to improve the assisted subjects' cognitive aspects and competencies regarding Islamic heritage. The post-mentoring condition could be observed as an increase compared to the pre-mentoring. Hence, presenting data comparing the cognitive aspects and competencies of the subjects before and after mentoring is necessary to assess the progress or improvement. The following is a presentation of the data before and after mentoring, divided into cognitive and competency or skills.

- a. Cognitive aspect: The cognitive aspect assistance included knowledge about Islamic heritage in Southeast Asia, such as historical mosques, Islamic museums, the tombs of Guardians, Ulama, and Kings, Islamic kingdoms, traditions, haul ceremonies, and art. A comparison of the cognitive aspects before and after mentoring is displayed in the figure below.

Figure 4.

Percentage of post-mentoring cognitive aspects



Before the implementation of the community service program, the assisted participants already comprehended the cognitive aspects of Islamic heritage, such as historical mosques, Islamic museums, and Islamic kingdoms. However, their knowledge was limited to the existence of these sites and basic historical information. It was attributed to several factors: *Firstly*, historical mosque sites, museums, and prominent works were more accessible and frequently visited. Meanwhile, other sites, such as tombs outside of Indonesia, were relatively less known among certain groups. *Secondly*, mosque sites were often visited primarily for worship, contributing to their broader recognition. Nevertheless, the participants' knowledge of the historical background of these sites was relatively limited. Following the mentoring, the participants became aware of the history and significance, enabling them to contribute to the protection and preservation of the sites.

Furthermore, the participants had a limited understanding of tomb sites, haul ceremonies, and traditions. It could be attributed to several factors: *Firstly*, there were distinctions in traditions between the diaspora and the local communities abroad. *Secondly*, there was

restricted interaction between the diaspora and the community, hindering the exchange of knowledge and cultural practices. *Lastly*, there was limited information and access to these sites. Regardless, after the mentoring, the participants learned about these aspects.

- b. Competency aspect: The mentoring provided in the competency aspects sought to enhance participants' proficiency in accessing and writing information about Islamic heritage in Southeast Asia. It included fostering competency in writing Arabic *Pegon*, which is an integral part of the Islamic culture in Southeast Asia and continues to thrive. A comparison of the competency aspects before and after mentoring is presented in the figure below.

Figure 5.

Percentage of Post-mentoring Competency Aspects

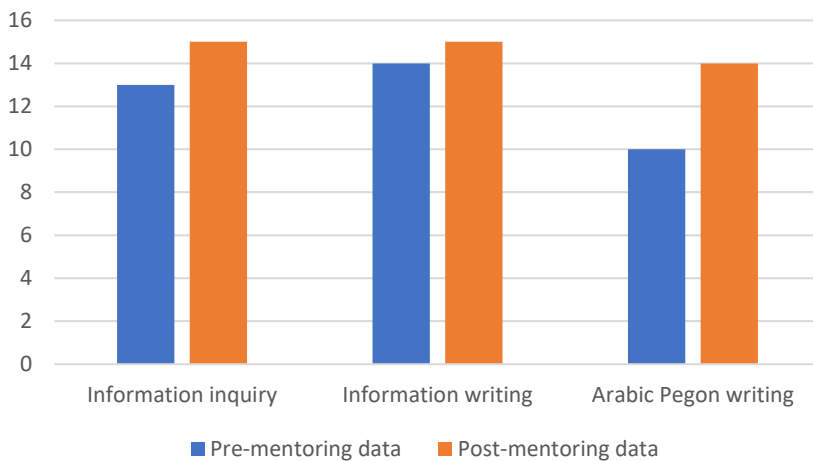
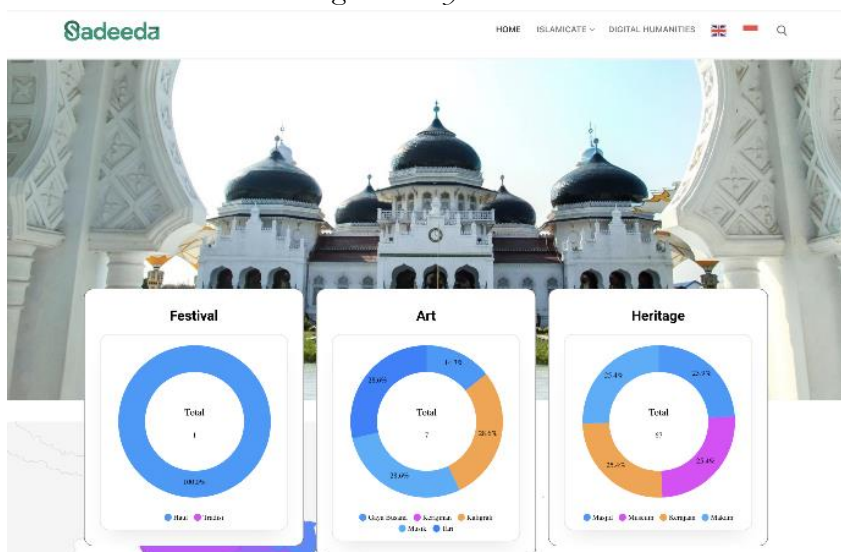


Figure 6.
Southeast Asia Islamic Heritage Directory



This competency aspect was closely associated with efforts to boost Islamic heritage literacy among the assisted subjects. It encompassed three components: searching for and writing Islamic heritage information and writing Arabic *Pegon* as part of the Islamic heritage in Southeast Asia. Before the mentoring, some participants lacked experience writing information in a directory format. Therefore, the mentoring program provided guidance on the technical steps involved in collecting information and writing according to the directory format. As a result, there was an improvement in the participants' competence in data processing and dissemination of Islamic heritage information. The outcomes of their efforts were published in the directory available on the website www.sadeeda.com. Disseminating the results of this assistance program became an integral part of the broader endeavor to foster cultural awareness and preserve Islamic heritage in Southeast Asia.

Conclusion

This mentoring program was implemented to address the specific needs of the Indonesian diaspora in Southeast Asia. These needs included limited efforts to strengthen communities with shared traditions, languages, cultures, and religious histories; limited cognitive aspects of Islamic heritage in Southeast Asia; and limited competency in searching and writing information about Islamic heritage and Arabic *Pegon* writing, which is essential for preserving Islamic cultural literacy.

The present community service was designed to improve the cognitive aspects and competencies regarding Islamic heritage, as well as the skills in searching and writing information about Islamic heritage in Southeast Asia. The program consisted of preparation, implementation, mentoring, and evaluation phases. The results demonstrated improvements in the cognitive aspects of the assisted subjects regarding Islamic heritage and their competency in searching and writing information about Islamic heritage and Arabic *Pegon* writing. The data revealed an increase in the cognitive aspects related to Islamic heritage, covering historical mosques and Islamic kingdoms (13.3%), Islamic museums (21.43%), Islamic traditions (35.71%), and Islamic arts (42%), tombs (38.46%), and haul ceremonies (84%). Regarding competency, there was a 13.3% gain in the ability to search and write Islamic heritage information, while the competency in Arabic *Pegon* writing increased by 28.57%.

Based on these findings, several suggestions and recommendations can be made to ensure the sustainability of collaboration among the Indonesian Muslim diaspora. *Firstly*, diaspora assistance activities related to Islamic heritage should be developed sustainably by strengthening literacy and documentation efforts. It will help preserve cultural traditions and ensure their continuity, especially among younger generations, in the face of globalization and disruptive forces. Moreover, it is to prevent the deterioration of traditional practices by new cultures, thereby maintaining the integrity of these traditions. In this regard, the documentation and digitization of Islamic

heritage aim to create information databases, facilitate dissemination, and establish digital archives. These endeavors offer various benefits, including advancing research and development on cultural treasures in Southeast Asia and community service based on Islamic heritage. *Secondly*, future assistance activities should be focused on ethnic-based diasporas, such as the Javanese, Sundanese, Bugis, Madurese, and other ethnic groups residing abroad. The goal is to comprehend the adaptation process and cultural interactions and how they can promote economic improvement, cognitive development, social contribution, and cross-community cooperation in foreign lands.

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